

VZCZCXYZ0001  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKU #0168 0551111  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 241111Z FEB 10  
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4673  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000168

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/RA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2020  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [KU](#)  
SUBJECT: MP MOVES TO GRILL OIL/INFORMATION MINISTER

REF: A. 2009 KUWAIT 1216  
[B.](#) 2009 KUWAIT 1204  
[C.](#) 2009 KUWAIT 1154  
[D.](#) 2009 KUWAIT 1147

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and d

First Grilling of the New Year  
-----

[1.](#) (C) Tribal MP Ali Al-Dokbasi filed on February 23 a motion to interpellate Minister of Oil/Information Shaykh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al Sabah on grounds that the government failed to enforce adequately an audio-visual media law in the aftermath of urbanite Mohammed Al-Juwaihel's December 18 scathing media attack on tribal Kuwaitis (refs A, B). The grilling, should it take place, will likely be scheduled in mid-March. The motion comes on the heels of a February 21 announcement by the Office of the Prosecutor of charges against Al-Juwaihel and his staff at Scope TV of defaming tribalist MP Musallam Al-Barrak. The prosecution is pressing for fines in the amount of 3,000 KD (USD 10,500) each.

Rumors Abound  
-----

[2.](#) (C) This motion represents the first "grilling" attempt by MPs since the December interpellations -- led by MP Musallam Al-Barrak -- of the PM and three other cabinet members (refs C,D). Because of Shaykh Ahmad's widely recognized inattention to the Information portfolio (he prefers to focus on oil matters), and given recent controversies over "anti-unity" speech in the local media (of which the Al-Juwaihel incident is only the most prominent), post's interlocutors had widely speculated that Shaykh Ahmad would be the first minister grilled once the current detente between the parliament and government began to break down.

[3.](#) (C) Parliamentary support for the grilling motion is far from certain, as our informal polling of MPs suggests some -- while no fans of Shaykh Ahmad -- consider the timing of the request inappropriate given the current dtente between parliament and government and the desire to move forward to approve an ambitious 100 billion-plus usd development plan. Nonetheless, some of post's interlocutors have speculated that to forestall Shaykh Ahmad's grilling (if it looks likely to transpire), the GoK might instead opt for a minor cabinet reshuffle, and likely assign the Information portfolio to Amiri Diwan Media Advisor Dr. Sami Al-Nisf (this would also have the advantage of putting the usually controversial Information portfolio into the hands of a more acceptably grillable non-Al Sabah family member). However, others suggest freeing up the information portfolio would give the Amir the opportunity to curry favor with the Al-Salem branch of the Al Sabah family by appointing one of its members (or a

loyalist associated with that line of the family) to the Information Ministry. (Comment: The Information portfolio has been the downfall of many a minister in the past, so placing an Al Salem into the job would represent something of a double-edged sword for the branch. End Comment.) Speculation on a resurgent Al Salem line -- whether accurate or wishful thinking -- has been the natural outgrowth of the unexpected recent return of the line's leader, Shaykh Salem Al Ali Al-Sabah, from a long convalescence in the UK (see septel).

\*\*\*\*\*

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:  
visit Kuwait's Classified Website at:

[http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Kuwa it](http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Kuwa%20it)  
\*\*\*\*\*

WILLIAMS